

WALDRINGFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL



FLEXI-SCHOOLING POLICY

ADOPTED: Summer Term 2017

REVIEWED:

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: Summer Term 2020

As a school we firmly believe that full time education within a school environment is the best option for all children and young people to enjoy, achieve and attain to their full potential. We recognise however, that parents may choose other ways for their child or young person to engage in effective, full-time, and suitable education. One way could be for them to request for a school to agree a flexi-schooling arrangement. This request must emanate from the parent, it is not for a Headteacher, a member of school staff or an officer of the Local Authority to suggest or encourage a family to undertake flexi-schooling.

Background

The responsibility for a child receiving full-time education while he or she is of statutory school age lies with the parent.

Where a parent educates a child partly at school and partly at home or elsewhere as an expression of parental preference, this is called flexi-schooling.

In November 2007 the DCSF issued "Elective Home Education: Guidelines for Local Authorities" which contained the following paragraph (5.6)

"Flexi-schooling" or "flexible school attendance" is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child is registered at school and attends the school only part of the time; the rest of the time the child is home educated. This can be a long-term arrangement or a short-term measure for a particular reason. Flexi-schooling is a legal option provided that the head teacher at the school concerned agrees to the arrangement. The child will be required to follow the National Curriculum whilst at school but not whilst he or she is being educated at home. Local Authorities should make sure that head teachers are made familiar with flexi-schooling and how it may work in practice.

A parent may request flexi-schooling on a long-term basis where he or she favours this form of education or they may request flexi-schooling for a short period, when, for example, the child is unable to attend school every day due to illness or injury.

How should an application for flexi-schooling be made?

Flexi schooling should not be confused with elective home education. Parents have a legal right to choose to home educate their child but parents do not have a legal right to insist on a flexi-schooling arrangement being agreed by any school.

Whilst a parent may request that their child is flexi schooled it is entirely at the Headteacher's discretion, acting with the authority of the governing body, as to whether or not the school is prepared to agree to a flexi-schooling arrangement.

If a parent is interested in making a request for a flexi-schooling arrangement, contact should be made directly with the Headteacher of the child's current or prospective school so that the proposal may be considered.

What should parents consider?

The implications of making partial educational provision at home are significant, both in terms of expertise and resources and in the commitment to make a shared provision work.

The education provided at home and at school should together constitute a full-time provision.

While there is no statutory curriculum for the home education part of a flexi-schooling arrangement, parents/carers will need to be mindful of the impact on the child's access to the National Curriculum and the possible fragmentation of the learning experience.

Flexi-schooling is unlikely to succeed if the reasons for choosing it are negative and the choice is motivated by the desire to avoid difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, peers, aspects of schools discipline or attendance itself.

Flexi-schooling does not give an alternative means of opting out of an element of the curriculum with which a child, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable.

The child may find that his or her limited attendance at school makes it difficult to maintain strong relationships with peers and may experience an element of social exclusion.

If the child moves to a different school, there can be no guarantee that flexi-schooling would be able to continue. A fresh request for a flexi-schooling arrangement must be made to the new school Headteacher. It would then be a decision for the Headteacher at the new school to make.

What does the Headteacher consider?

All requests must be considered by the Headteacher on their own merits. The Headteacher will take into account the best interests of the child; their educational progress and achievement; their safety, safeguarding and welfare; together with the likely impact on the discipline, morale and organisation of the school.

It is the advice of the Local Authority to a school when deciding whether to agree to a flexi-schooling arrangement, a head teacher must consider:

- safeguarding and welfare of the child is of paramount importance. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off site and a risk assessment should be undertaken. No agreement should be reached where a Headteacher has concerns that it would put the child at risk of harm while not attending at his or her school. Therefore by agreeing to flexi-schooling the school is certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils.
- current and anticipated level of educational attainment, achievement and progress of the individual pupil and the arrangements for monitoring the learning and progress of the individual pupil
- the appropriateness of the education proposed by the parent away from the school,
- flexi schooling education provided at home and that provided at school must together constitute a full time education provision,
- the effect on school discipline and the morale and motivation of other children on roll at the school,
- the effect on the school organisation, school resources and funding
- the impact on overall school attainment and progress figures

The Role of the Governing Body

The governing body may be involved in agreeing and reviewing the school's approach to flexi-schooling requests but they should not become involved in individual cases, as some governors may have a more formal role if a dispute arises and/or a complaint is made.

Governors should satisfy themselves that the Headteacher has fully considered the points highlighted above and are fully conversant with the school attendance statutory guidance when reaching a decision.

Appeals

There is no appeal against the decision of a Headteacher not to agree to a flexi-schooling request or if a Headteacher decides to cease an individual child's flexi-schooling arrangement.

Written Agreements with Parents

A written and signed agreement (see appendix 1) must be formulated between the school and parent in order to make expectations clear for all concerned. The agreement will be formalised by the schools flexi-schooling policy and will include:

- The normal expected pattern of attendance at school.
- The length of time the agreement is to run before being reviewed. Typically this may be one term.
- What flexibility there will be regarding special events which fall outside of the normal arrangement such as, but not limited to, assemblies, school trips, school productions or performances, sports events, visitors to the school.
- How the register will be marked (see section Marking the Attendance Register)
- The parents must contact the school if the child is absent from a session that they would normally be present at school or at approved educational activity.
- How the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence as it would for other children.
- What the arrangement will be at times of children's assessment.
- If a parent chooses to employ at his or her own expense another person to educate the child at home, he or she will be responsible for ensuring that person is suitable to have access to children and the Headteacher needs to include the points outlined previously in the section "What does the Headteacher consider?"
- Any perceived special educational needs and associated provision.
- Recommended regular planning meetings between parent and school to ensure the child achieves his or her potential and to promote good home-school relationships.
- Under what circumstances and with what notice either party can withdraw from the arrangement.
- How any disputes will be resolved.

Procedure for when a child is flexi-schooled

He or she will already be registered at the school.

On days when he or she attends school, the National Curriculum must be followed as if the child were attending full-time.

The requirement to follow the National Curriculum will apply to all children except:

- Temporarily, due to exceptional circumstances such as prolonged absence from school on health grounds or family crisis.
- As a part of a Statement of Special Educational Needs.
- With the permission of the Secretary of State to allow curriculum development and experiment to take place, for an agreed period.

On days when he or she does not attend school, the child need not follow the National Curriculum.

Marking the Attendance Register

Recent clarification received from the DfE (March and August 2013) state that pupils should be marked absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education.

Schools should not mark a pupil as attending school, using the attendance code B for off-site education activity, unless the school is responsible for supervising the off-site education, and can ensure the safety, safeguarding and the welfare of the pupil off-site. If flexi schooling provision is coded on the school register as a "B " the activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded and any absence or non-provision must be notified to the school and coded accordingly,

When an absence occurs on days when the child is due to attend, schools should follow up the absence in the usual way in line with the school policy.

These sessions will be included in the number of possible sessions and the absence and attendance figures in the Attainment and Achievement tables.

Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs

There is no distinction between children who are to be flexi-schooled and those who are not.

The duty to review a child's statement of special educational needs on an annual basis or sooner if appropriate, still applies.

Funding

The child will be recorded by the school as attending full-time – with sessions not in school being recorded as per agreement. Therefore the school will receive full-time funding.

Flexi-schooled children are included in count returns as for other children.

Admissions

There is no distinction between children who are flexi-schooled and those who are not. Whatever the degree of attendance, the child will count towards admissions numbers on roll as full-time.

Infant Class Size Legislation (ICSL)

There is no distinction between children who are to be flexi-schooled and those who are not. Whatever the degree of attendance, the child will not be an exception to ICSL (sometimes called Key Stage One legislation) solely by being flexi-schooled.

Insurance

There is no distinction between children who are to be flexi-schooled and those who are not.

Children Educated outside their Chronological Age-Group

There is no distinction between children who are to be flexi-schooled and those who are not.

When the education being provided at home is not suitable

If it appears to the school that parents are not providing a suitable education as agreed between the school and the parents; the school may ask the parents to take remedial action. If the parent declines to do so or the school is still concerned about the provision of the education being provided at home, the school may withdraw its agreement to the flexi-schooling arrangement. The child would then be required to attend at school on a full-time basis.

A school attendance order would not need to be initiated as the child is on the roll of a school.

If a child fails to return to full-time attendance the school should leave the absence unauthorised and refer the case to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) in line with school and County procedures.

Appendix 1

Waldringfield Primary School

Waldringfield Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 4QL

Telephone 01473 736276

Email school@waldringfield.suffolk.sch.uk



Headteacher Mrs S Wood BAed (Hons) MAed NPQH

Dear [NAME OF PARENTS]

Following our recent meeting on [insert date] I enclose the written agreement which we discussed. Please sign and return one of the copies to school.

- The normal expected pattern of attendance for [NAME OF CHILD] will be as follows:
 - Should special events fall outside of [child's name] arranged school days, there will be flexibility and [name of child] can attend these events. Events such as, but not limited to, assemblies, school trips, school productions or performances, sports events, visitors to the school.
 - When [name of child] is not at school due to this flexi school arrangement the code C will be entered into the register.
 - The parents must contact the school if the child is absent from a session that they would normally be present at school
 - At times of national assessment [name of child] will be in the school for all tests and assessments
 - Parents will be expected to attend the termly parent teacher consultations meetings parent and the school will ensure the parents receive all home/school communication
 - This arrangement will be reviewed termly. The next review meeting will be [INSERT DATE OF NEXT MEETING]

Parents

Signed.....Dated.....

Signed.....Dated.....

School

Signed.....Dated.....